

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Charles Lamb, #186788
a.k.a Charles Willis Lamb,

Plaintiff,

v.

Department of Corrections,

Defendant.

) C/A No. 8:09-1240-CMC-BHH
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) REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
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Charles Lamb (Plaintiff), proceeding *pro se*, brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983.* Plaintiff is incarcerated at Lieber Correctional Institution, and he files this action *in forma pauperis* under 28 U.S.C. § 1915. Plaintiff alleges that the Defendant has refused to take Plaintiff before the State Classification Board for his yearly review. Plaintiff seeks monetary damages.

Pro Se and In Forma Pauperis Review

Under established local procedure in this judicial district, a careful review has been made of the *pro se* complaint pursuant to the procedural provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1915; 28 U.S.C. § 1915A; and the Prison Litigation Reform Act, Pub. L. No. 104-134, 110 Stat.

*Pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. §636(b)(1)(B) and Local Rule 73.02(B)(2)(d), D.S.C., the undersigned is authorized to review such complaints for relief and submit findings and recommendations to the District Court. Further reference to this complaint brought under Title 42 of the United States Code will be by section number only.

1321 (1996). This review has been conducted in light of the following precedents: *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-25 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972); *Nasim v. Warden, Md. House of Corr.*, 64 F.3d 951 (4th Cir. 1995); and *Todd v. Baskerville*, 712 F.2d 70 (4th Cir. 1983).

This complaint has been filed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, which permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in federal court without prepaying the administrative costs of proceeding with the lawsuit. To protect against possible abuses of this privilege, the statute allows a district court to dismiss the case upon a finding that the action “fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted” or is “frivolous or malicious.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i), (ii). A finding of frivolity can be made where the complaint “lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact.” *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. at 31. A claim based on a meritless legal theory may be dismissed *sua sponte* under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). See *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319 (1989); *Allison v. Kyle*, 66 F.3d 71 (5th Cir. 1995).

This Court is required to liberally construe *pro se* documents, *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89 (2007); *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97 (1976), holding them to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys, *Hughes v. Rowe*, 449 U.S. 9 (1980). Even under this less stringent standard, however, the *pro se* complaint is subject to summary dismissal. The mandated liberal construction afforded to *pro se* pleadings means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the plaintiff could prevail, it should do so. However, the requirement of liberal

construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts which set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Dep't of Soc. Servs.*, 901 F.2d 387 (4th Cir. 1990).

Background

Plaintiff sues the Department of Corrections (DOC) for "refusing to take [Plaintiff] in front of the Department of Corrections State Classification Board after the Department of Corrections brought [Plaintiff] a paper to sign for [Plaintiff's] State Classification Notice for [his] one (1) year State Classification Review."

Discussion

This complaint is filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, which "'is not itself a source of substantive rights,' but merely provides 'a method for vindicating federal rights elsewhere conferred.'" *Albright v. Oliver*, 510 U.S. 266, 271(1994) (quoting *Baker v. McCollan*, 443 U.S. 137, 144 n.3 (1979)). Plaintiff's sole Defendant in this action is the Department of Corrections, which the Plaintiff has unsuccessfully attempted to sue in three unrelated prior cases. See Civil Action No.'s: 8:08-3685; 8:08-3732; and 8:09-322.** In Reports and Recommendations issued in those cases, Plaintiff was specifically told that the Department of Corrections cannot be sued for damages in this Court

** This Court may take judicial notice of Plaintiff's litigation history and of the contents of his various filings with the Court. *Aloe Creme Laboratories, Inc. v. Francine Co.*, 425 F.2d 1295, 1296 (5th Cir. 1970). See also *Colonial Penn Ins. Co. v. Coil*, 887 F.2d 1236, 1239 (4th Cir. 1989) ("We note that 'the most frequent use of judicial notice is in noticing the content of court records'").

pursuant to § 1983, because the agency is protected by Eleventh Amendment immunity. ***
 See *Alden v. Maine*, 527 U.S. 706 (1999).

Although the Eleventh Amendment's language does not explicitly prohibit a citizen of a state from suing his own state in federal court, the Supreme Court in *Hans v. Louisiana*, 134 U. S. 1 (1889), held that the purposes of the Eleventh Amendment, i.e. protection of a state treasury, would not be served if a state could be sued by its citizens in federal court. Thus, the Eleventh Amendment forbids a federal court from rendering a judgment against an unconsenting state in favor of a citizen of that state. **** *Edelman v. Jordan*, 415 U. S. 651, 663 (1974). Agencies of the state share this immunity when they are the alter egos of the state. See *Maryland Stadium Authority v. Ellerbe Becket Inc.*, 407 F.3d 255, 261 n. 8 (4th Cir. 2005). As the Plaintiff's § 1983 claim for damages against the Defendant state agency is barred by the Eleventh Amendment, this case is subject to summary dismissal.

Recommendation

Accordingly, it is recommended that the District Judge dismiss the complaint in the above-captioned case *without prejudice* and without issuance and service of process. See

*** The Eleventh Amendment provides: "The judicial power of the United States shall not be construed to extend to any suit in law or equity, commenced or prosecuted against one of the United States by Citizens of another State, or by Citizens or Subjects of any Foreign State."

**** While the United States Congress can override Eleventh Amendment immunity through legislation, Congress has not overridden the states' Eleventh Amendment immunity in § 1983 cases. See *Quern v. Jordan*, 440 U.S. 332, 343 (1979).

United Mine Workers v. Gibbs, 383 U.S. 715 (1966). See also *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 324-25 (1989); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519 (1972).

s/Bruce Howe Hendricks
United States Magistrate Judge

May 18, 2009
Greenville, South Carolina

Notice of Right to File Objections to Report and Recommendation

The parties are advised that they may file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation with the District Court Judge. Objections must specifically identify the portions of the Report and Recommendation to which objections are made and the basis for such objections. In the absence of a timely filed objection, a district court need not conduct a de novo review, but instead must “only satisfy itself that there is no clear error on the face of the record in order to accept the recommendation.” *Diamond v. Colonial Life & Acc. Ins. Co.*, 416 F.3d 310 (4th Cir. 2005).

Specific written objections must be filed within ten (10) days of the date of service of this Report and Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); Fed. R. Civ. P. 72(b). The time calculation of this ten-day period excludes weekends and holidays and provides for an additional three (3) days for filing by mail. Fed. R. Civ. P. 6(a) & (e). Filing by mail pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 5 may be accomplished by mailing objections to:

Larry W. Propes, Clerk
United States District Court
Post Office Box 10768
Greenville, South Carolina 29603

Failure to timely file specific written objections to this Report and Recommendation will result in waiver of the right to appeal from a judgment of the District Court based upon such Recommendation. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1); *Thomas v. Arn*, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); *Wright v. Collins*, 766 F.2d 841 (4th Cir. 1985); *United States v. Schronce*, 727 F.2d 91 (4th Cir. 1984).